
5. URBAN DESIGN

URBAN DESIGN COMPONENTS

The form and image of Towson is created by its vistas, views, gateways, skyline buildings, landmarks, design character, and scale. The Urban Design Plan details the three-dimensional form for Towson and describes the quality environment desired and the deliberate integration of the open space network, streetscape and amenities, public rights-of-way definitions, and development patterns.

Elements of the Urban Design Plan include:

- A. Streetscape System;
- B. Open Space Concept and Framework;
- C. Development Guidelines for Design Areas; and
- D. Design Review Advisory Panel.

This urban design framework with the land use and transportation plan components provides a comprehensive, interrelated structure for the Towson core with recommendations for implementation.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

This urban design section describes a strategy to improve the quality and character of Towson while addressing the following issues of concern.

- . The design quality of new construction in the Towson Core.
- . The lack of pedestrian and retail connection from the Towson Town Center Mall to the traditional retail strip of the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of York Road.
- . The development of the Towson Transit Center site.
- . The potential expansion of the government complex.
- . The lack of pedestrian connection of Towson State University and Goucher College to the core of Towson.
- . The parking structures that offer no design relief for the core and nearby neighborhoods.
- . The need for a Design Review Advisory Panel.
- . The lack of open space in and around the core.

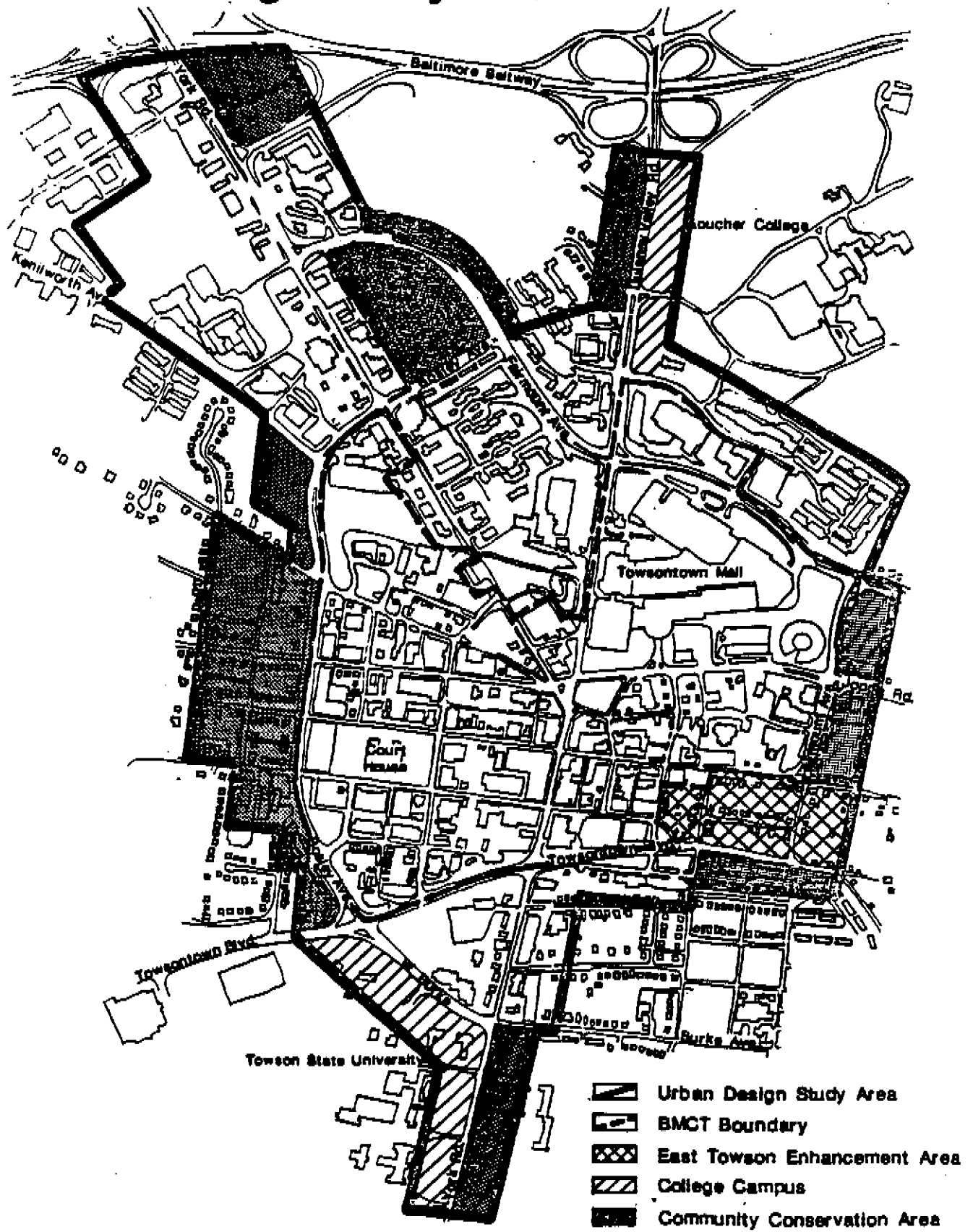
STUDY AREA

The Urban Design Study Area extends beyond the confines of the existing BM-CT district for the urban core. The study area was expanded to include (See Study Area Map 4):

- Community Conservation Areas adjacent to the BM-CT district.
- The East Towson Enhancement Area that borders the BM-CT district.

Urban Design Study Area

MAP 4



- The edges of Towson State University along Towsontown Boulevard, Burke Avenue and York Road, and Goucher College along Dulaney Valley Road.
- The areas within the Fairmount, Goucher, Towsontown and Bosley loop road.
- The York Road corridor from the Baltimore Beltway to Towson State University.
- Dulaney Valley Road from the Beltway to the core.

INFORMATION COLLECTION ANALYSIS

Existing Design Features and Inventory (Map 5)

Existing design features that contribute to the overall form, image and design of Towson were identified and mapped. Design features were considered important or significant if they distinguished Towson from other areas in Baltimore County. These features were then incorporated into the design recommendations and guidelines. Buildings of historical significance (defined by a previous study and listed in the Appendix) were also mapped to identify location and concentration.

Development Opportunities (Map 6)

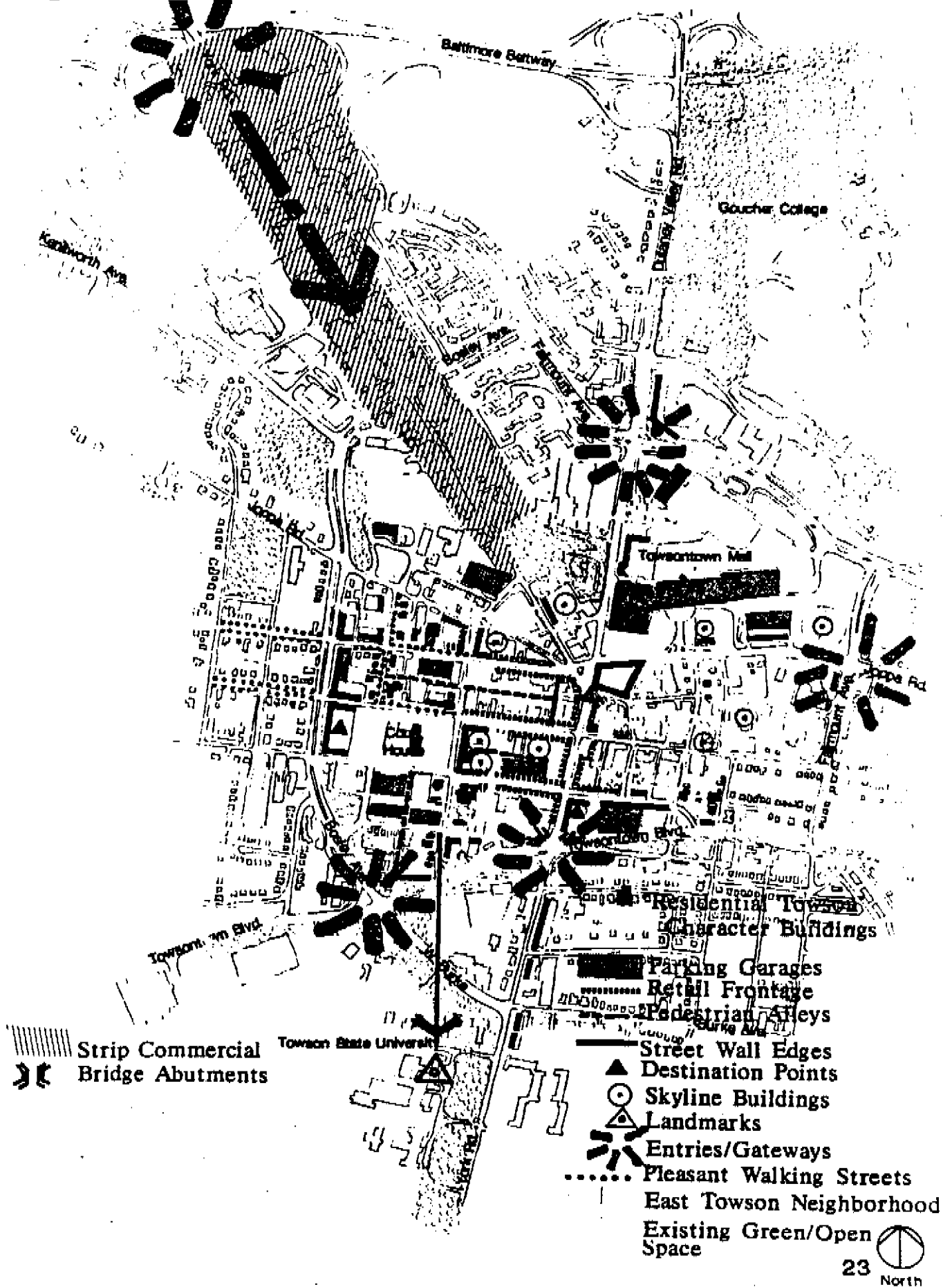
Existing development, recent construction, and undeveloped parcels within the urban design study area were evaluated for their permanence or likelihood of change. If a building or site was vacant or undeveloped, then it was considered an opportunity site or most likely to change. If a site appeared to be under utilized or in need of substantial repair, then it was considered as a site that may re-develop in the future. This identification was beneficial in determining which areas of the core need attention in terms of urban design recommendations.

Design or Sub Areas (Map 7)

Areas within the commercial core were grouped according to similarity of form and image. Buildings and sites were grouped by type, land use, open space, landscape treatment, design features and road network. The Design Areas are:

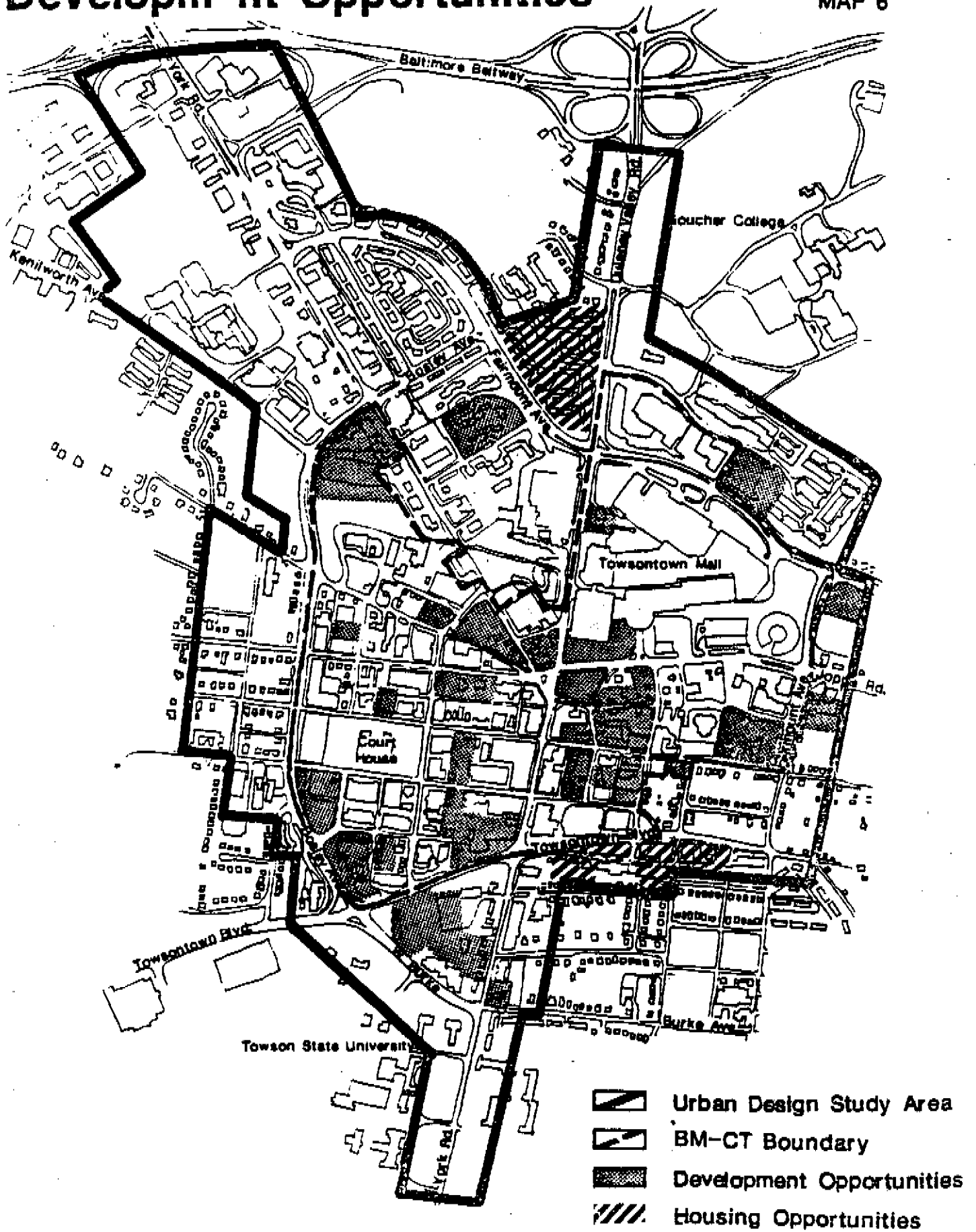
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|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Central Towson | - East Towson Enhancement Area |
| - Fairmount/Dulaney Valley | - York Road North and South |
| - Government Campus | - E, SE, SW, & W Transitions |
| - Institutional Towson | - College Campuses |

Opportunity sites are included within each design area and plans for development should consider the form and image context of its design area. Additional details of the urban design analysis process can be found in the Appendix.



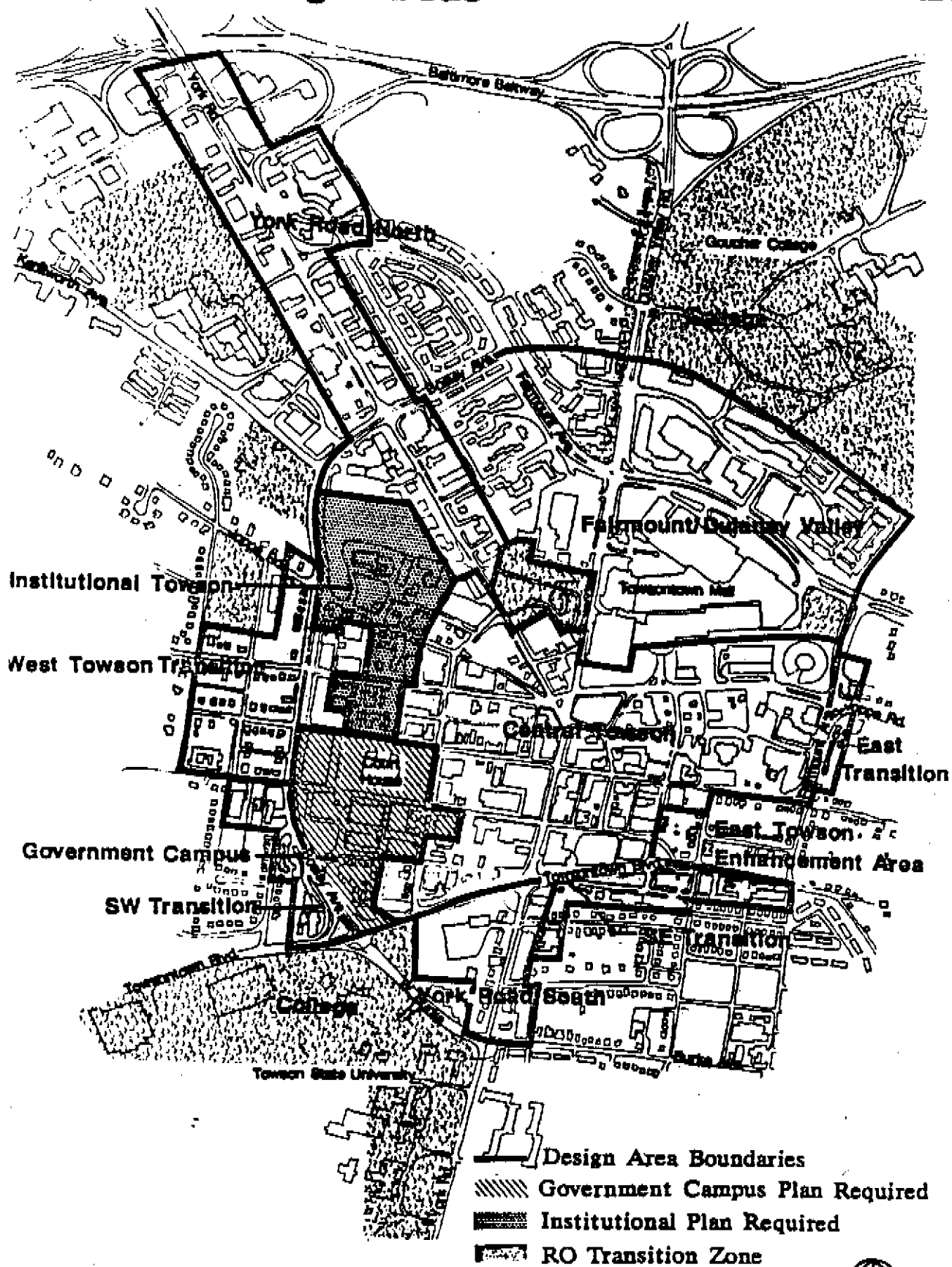
Development Opportunities

MAP 6



Proposed Design Areas

MAP 7



THE URBAN DESIGN PLAN ELEMENTS

A. Streetscape Definition

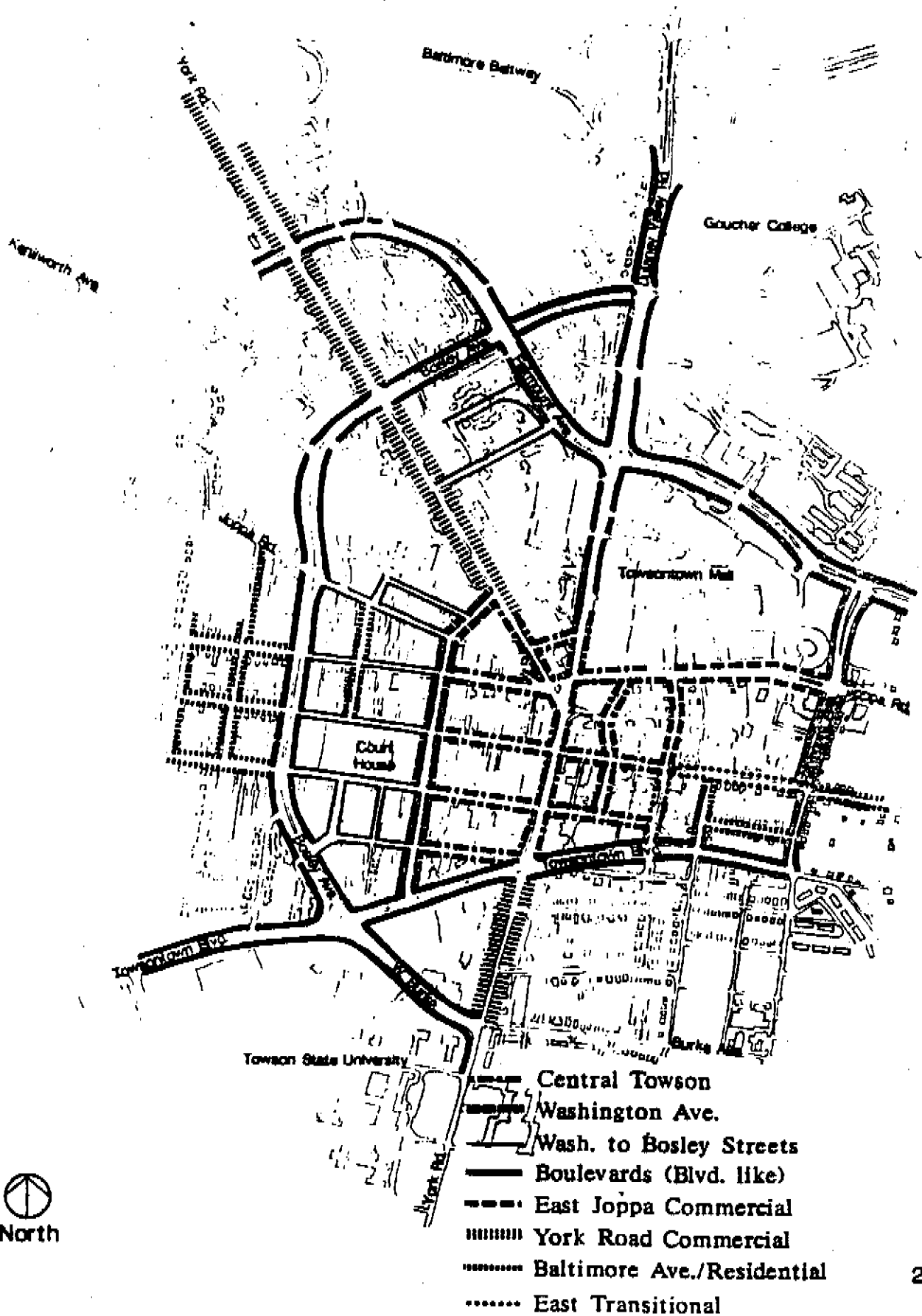
A streetscape system is the most significant public improvement that can be made in Towson to unify the design areas and provide a coherent image. The proposed streetscape systems prioritize pedestrian needs and influence the overall urban form.

The proposed streetscape system guidelines are designed to:

1. Provide unifying landscape themes for the design areas.
2. Establish minimum building setback lines for appropriate sidewalk widths.
3. Establish build-to lines, particularly in the Central Towson design area, to maintain a unified urban street wall system.
4. Provide a setting for including other pedestrian amenities, such as street furniture and decorative lighting.
5. Aid transition between new buildings and existing buildings.
6. Provide identification and entry.
7. Maintain the remaining alleys for both service and delivery access as well as pedestrian connections to rear parking areas.

The most important principles for all of the streetscape types are consistency and continuity. The streetscape requirements are mapped for each block (see Streetscape Map 8). The eight prototypes are:

1. Central Towson (Map 9) - This streetscape is very urban and is designed to be a high-capacity, pedestrian-oriented system. All-brick sidewalk paving is recommended along the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of York Road to differentiate this street from the other urban streets. The details of this streetscape system include:
 - 20-25' setback from curb to face of building.
 - Trees in plant beds or grates - 30 ft. on center.
 - Pedestrian level decorative lighting 60 ft. on center, generally.
 - Street furniture: benches, waste receptacles, planters.
 - Recessed entries.
 - Display windows.
 - Sign bands and canopies.
 - Coordinated directional and parking signs.
 - Drives and curbcuts as integral part of streetscape; pedestrian orientation, handicap accessible.
 - No drive-up-teller drives crossing sidewalks.
 - Crosswalk islands.



- Minimal sidewalk grades.
 - No hedges between curb and building along retail streets.
 - Consolidated newspaper boxes.
 - Bike racks.
 - Bus shelters as part of the building design and streetscape.
 - Mid-block pedestrian crossings at Allegheny, Pennsylvania and Chesapeake between Washington and York Road.
 - Restaurant tables along sidewalk where possible.
2. Washington Avenue (Map 10) - This street is to be treated similarly to the Central Towson streetscape, except for a more generous setback that would allow for a double row of street trees where possible.
 3. Boulevards or Boulevard-like (Map 11 and Open Space Map 17)
 - This streetscape system affords a generous building setback to allow for a double row of trees and additional landscaping features. It is desirable to plant trees in the median strips whenever possible.

Additional considerations include:

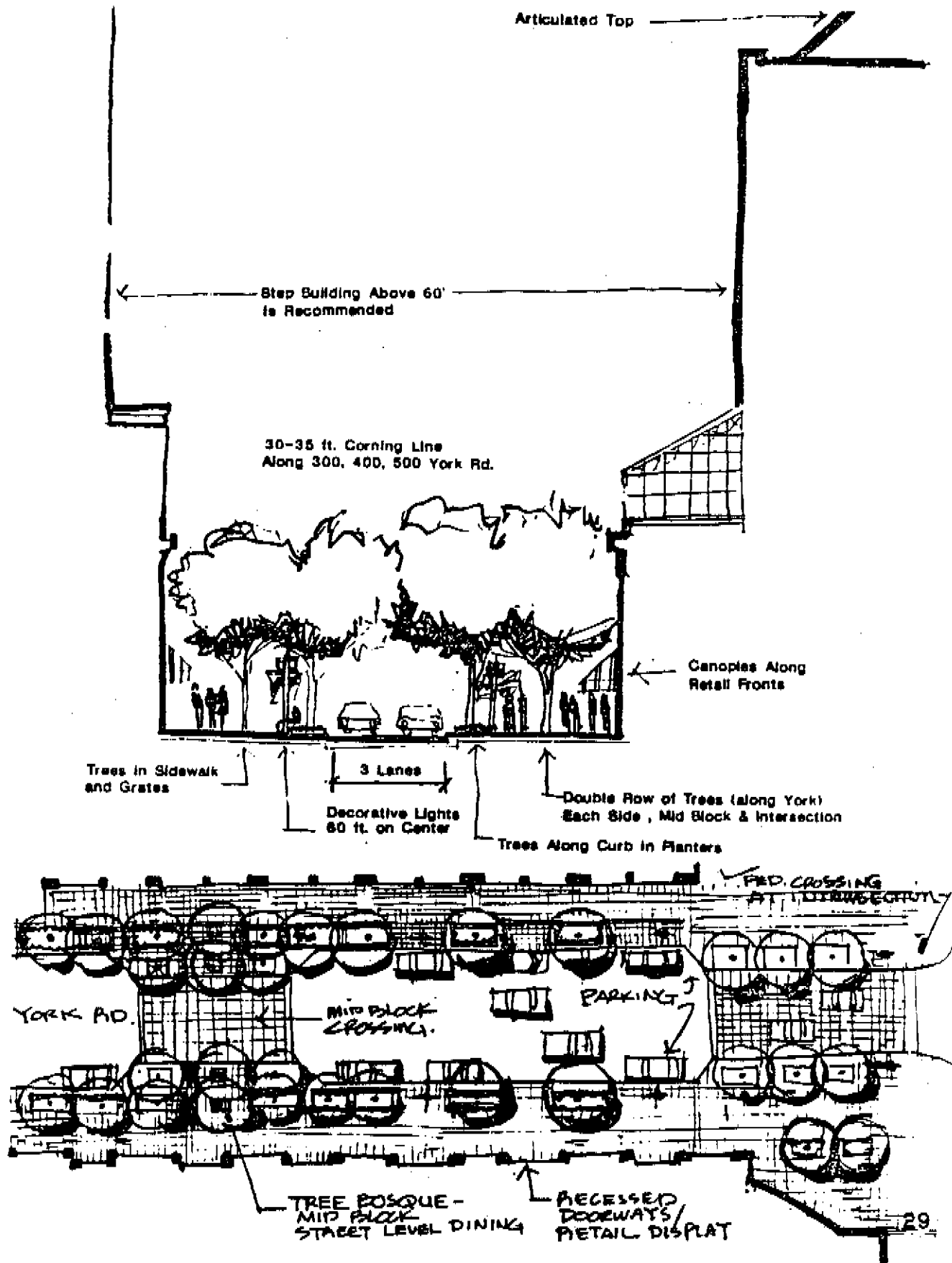
- a. Vehicular drop-off lanes are not desirable on the boulevard designated streets, particularly along Bosley Avenue. For development sites along the designated boulevards, provide visitor access/parking along the cross streets or alleyways.
 - b. Pedestrian walks should be separated from the curb by a landscaped strip.
4. East Joppa Commercial (Map 12) - This streetscape is similar to the Boulevard streetscape, except the roads do not have a median strip.
 5. Pennsylvania/Chesapeake Avenues (Map 13) - This streetscape system connects the Boulevard system of Bosley Avenue to the more urban system of Washington Avenue. This system requires a planting area between the curb and sidewalk and between the sidewalk and the building.

Additional considerations include:

- a. The County should plant street trees between the sidewalk and curb around the Courthouse and the County Courts Building.
6. York Road Commercial (Map 14) - The intent of this streetscape system which applies to the segments of York Road between Burke Avenue and Towsontown Boulevard and between

Central Towson

Map 9



Washington Avenue-Office

Map 10

